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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the traditional role of the college student teaching supervisor, makes some observations concerning this role, and suggests a new role. The author makes the following observations about the traditional role: (a) it implies that the college supervisor can best contribute to teacher education by observing and then holding conferences with student teachers; (b) it has frustrated college supervisors, student teachers, supervising teachers, and administrators because it does not meet their needs and expectations; (c) it makes it impossible for the best college supervisors to make a substantial contribution to student teachers; and (d) it is a waste of the college supervisor's talents. The author recommends a new role that would involve decreasing the amount of time devoted to observing and holding conferences with student teachers and increasing the amount of time devoted to in-service teacher education. Four advantages of this new role are listed. It is suggested that this new role will improve in-service teacher education since college supervisors constitute a group that is well qualified and conveniently available to improve in-service teacher education. Seven cautions regarding the new role of college supervisors are described at the conclusion of the paper. A 10-item bibliography is included. (PD)

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The Role of the College Student Teaching Supervisor in In-Service Teacher Education

Traditionally, the college student teaching supervisor has spent the bulk of his time sitting in the back of a classroom observing student teachers in action. This observation has typically been followed by a brief conference during which the college supervisor attempted to discuss the observed lesson and help the student teacher improve her performance.

Other facets of the traditional role of the college supervisor has included a good deal of "road time" behind the wheel of an automobile, conferring with supervising teachers, visiting with principals, and typing up final evaluation forms for each student teacher. Of course, this role has varied considerably from college to college. While this variation makes it difficult to generalize about the proportion of time the typical college supervisor has devoted to various tasks, it has probably been roughly as follows:

a) 5% training supervising teachers and other in-service activities
b) 10% administration
c) 10% public relations
d) 25% road time
e) 50% observing and conferencing with student teachers

This writer would like to make the following observations about this traditional role:

1. It implies that the college supervisor can best contribute to teacher education by observing and then conferencing with student teachers.
2. It has frustrated many college supervisors, student teachers, supervising teachers, and administrators -- mainly because it does not meet their needs and expectations.

3. This role makes it impossible for the best college supervisors, even under ideal conditions, to make a substantial contribution to student teachers.
4. It is, in large part, a waste of the college supervisor's talents.

Most college supervisors feel that the person in the best position to really help the student teacher is the teacher to whom the student teacher is assigned -- the "supervising teachers" or "cooperating teachers" as they are most commonly called. For instance, the supervising teacher is with the student teacher day in and day out, knows the students in the classroom, and is familiar with the school policy, curriculum and community -- all prerequisites to helping the student teacher. By way of contrast, the college supervisor typically can observe the student teacher only periodically (perhaps once every two weeks), does not know each student in the classroom, and usually is not familiar with the school's policies and curriculum -- a set of circumstances which make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to provide substantive help to the student teacher.

Many college supervisors have become dissatisfied and frustrated with this traditional role. Dissatisfied because the number of student teachers assigned to a college supervisor typically makes it impossible to observe each student teacher very often. Frustrated because even under the most ideal conditions, the college supervisor is able to be of relatively little value to the student teacher by observing her periodically. This traditional role of the college supervisor has also dissatisfied most student teachers, supervising teachers, and administrators because it has not met their needs. There is simply no way that the college supervisor can always be in the right place at the right time when he is needed. And furthermore, there is simply no way he can have sufficient information and insight to provide the right solution

to the problem. The person most readily available and possessing the most complete information, and therefore in the best position to help the student teacher, is the supervising teacher.

A Suggested New Role for the College Supervisor. Primarily due to these dissatisfactions and frustrations, there has been a growing feeling that the role of the college supervisor should be changed to better utilize his talents. For instance, this new role might involve decreasing the amount of time devoted to observing and conferencing with student teachers while increasing the amount of time devoted to in-service teacher education. This writer would like to suggest that this new role include approximately the following components:

a) 10% observing and conferencing with student teachers -- only at the request of a student teacher or supervising teacher.
b) 10% administration
c) 15% road time
d) 15% holding seminars with the entire group of student teachers -- this would be his main contact with student teachers
e) 50% serving as in-service change agent and a trainer of supervising teachers

This new role proposed for the college student teaching supervisor would have the following advantages:

1. It would allow the wealth of talent represented by college supervisors throughout the United States to be put to work on in-service teacher education in elementary and secondary schools.
2. It would allow the elementary and secondary cooperating teacher a

fuller opportunity to utilize his/her talent in pre-service teacher education.

3. It would open up new potential for cooperation between colleges and elementary/secondary schools.
4. It would constitute a more effective utilization of educational talent -- that of the college and elementary/secondary personnel.

This suggested new role implies that the college supervisor can, in the long run, best help student teachers by helping to improve the school and the supervising teacher through in-service education. This role, providing it is well understood and executed, is also more likely to meet the needs of the student teacher, supervising teachers, and administrator.

This change in function on the part of the college supervisor should also probably include a change in his title. The traditional titles of "College Student Teaching Supervisor" or "College Supervisor" do not accurately describe the new role advocated in this paper. This writer suggests that the title of "Teacher Education Consultant" might be more appropriate because it is sufficiently broad to include both pre- and in-service teacher education, and also because this new role would indeed turn the college supervisor into a "consultant" on many aspects of teacher education -- a consultant to administrators, teachers, student teachers, student teaching supervisors, and perhaps even campus based professors.

Need for Improved In-Service Teacher Education. It is relatively easy to document the need for improved in-service teacher education programs in the United States. In fact, all one really needs to do is to discuss the topic with a random sampling of school administrators and teachers. While much is written about the need for good in-service training programs

for all educational personnel (including administrators), unfortunately relatively little effort is made in this area by most school districts. In many cases, teachers and administrators simply receive no in-service help at all. It is true that some school districts have made considerable efforts to provide meaningful in-service programs, but even in these school districts it is difficult to find people who are well satisfied with the quality of the in-service program.

Many state departments of education share this concern about in-service programs, to the point that they are making considerable efforts to strengthen this vital area of school activity. Some of these efforts include requiring each school district to devise an in-service program that must receive state approval, or providing special financial help for in-service programs. Some states are even moving in the direction of requiring periodic re-certification of teachers based in part upon extensive in-service programs.

In-Service Credentials of the College Supervisor. This writer believes that the approximately 12,000 college supervisors throughout the United States constitute a group that is well qualified and quite conveniently available to improve in-service teacher education in this country. This contention is based upon the belief that college supervisors, by virtue of their training in supervision and their work with student teachers, have the skills and interest necessary to help in-service teachers improve their teaching performance. Most of them have a doctor's degree and considerable teaching experience.

It might be argued that, since the approximately 1,100 teacher preparing institutions at which these college student teaching supervisors work are fairly well scattered throughout the entire United States, student teaching supervisors are in a sense, already "poised" throughout the country

in a position to tackle the in-service teacher education job.

Cautions About This New Role. This suggested new role for the college supervisor, like all other educational advocations, contains many potential pitfalls. The following cautions are suggested for those who would implement this new role:

1. It must be implemented gradually over a period of time, as supervising teachers are adequately trained to assume the increased responsibility placed upon them. This increased responsibility comes about as the college supervisor devotes less time to observing and conferencing with student teachers and spends more of his time on in-service work. This means that the supervising teacher assumes more responsibility for supervising and evaluating the student teacher.
2. This new role for the college supervisor should not be used by colleges and universities to save money. As the college supervisor no longer has the responsibility for observing each student teacher a specific number of times, it might be tempting for colleges to rationalize the need for fewer college supervisors. This would obviously negate the possibility of the college supervisor making a significant contribution as an in-service change agent. It is easier to count student teaching credit hours generated than it is to document improvement brought about by in-service teacher education. Uninformed college administrators and/or college boards may not recognize the in-service value that can accrue through this new role for the college supervisor.
3. This suggested new role may well lead to more resident college

supervisors. If the college supervisor is to play a significant in-service role he will need to spend a good deal of time in the schools. This may well lead to a significant increase in resident college supervisors -- those who reside out in the field as opposed to on the college campus.

4. This new role places more responsibility, and therefore more power, for teacher education in the hands of elementary and secondary teachers. If the college is unwilling to give this increased responsibility and power to the public schools, then it should not make this change in the role of the college supervisor.

5. This new role leaves nearly all of the responsibility for grading and evaluating the student teacher with the elementary and secondary school personnel. This writer believes this is as it should be since the supervising teacher is in the best position to do this evaluating. The college supervisor would become involved in this evalution process only at the request of the supervising teacher or student teacher. Of course, it would be imparative that the student teacher, supervising teacher, and administrator thoroughly understand this evaluation process.

6. This proposed new role is likely to initially make some college supervisors somewhat aprehensive since, for many of them, it would represent a rather radical change in role and function. This change may therefore be resisted by some college supervisors. Furthermore, some college supervisors would need to be re-trained for this new role.

7. This suggested new role may eventually require a shifting of

financial resources. For instance, elementary and secondary school systems may well need to allocate some type of financial assistance to the college supervisor for the in-service teacher education work that he carries on. Furthermore, colleges may need to shift funds that have historically been used to provide cash honorarium payments to supervising teachers into a working fund for the in-service teacher education program.

Lastly, this new role must be understood and supported by all parties in order for it to work. For instance, the administrator who is not very concerned about improving in-service teacher education will probably not be enthusiastic about this plan. The supervising teacher who believes that the traditional student teaching model is the most appropriate one will probably have difficulty accepting this plan. The college supervisor who does not believe that the typical supervising teacher is competent to evaluate student teachers will probably be uncomfortable in this new role.

And finally, like all new educational ideas, the one proposed in this paper contains many weaknesses. This proposed new role for the college supervisor should not be quickly adopted but rather deserves only to be cautiously and thoughtfully adapted by those colleges that support its philosophy.

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